

I would like to thank my staff, Michelle Scott and others who put together this report.

TRIBUTE TO OLYMPIAN DEREK PARRA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to one of the America's new Olympic heroes. Like all Americans, I have been watching all of our athletes competing in the 2002 Games with great pride. We love the Olympics. We love international spirit and the thrill of competition, the joy of victory and the stories of struggle. The athletes capture our imagination and our hearts.

I have been watching one athlete with particular pride, speed skater Derek Parra, winner of the silver medal in the 5,000-meter event.

You see, Derek Parra is from my district. He went to school with my son, Joe Baca, Jr., in Rialto, and I attend church with Derek's father, Gilbert Parra, at St. Catherine's in Rialto, California.

Derek's family and friends gathered on Saturday at Graziano's Pizza Restaurant in Colton to watch the San Bernardino native break the world record in the 5,000-meter speed skating race with a time of 6 minutes, 17.98 seconds, beating his own best time by 15 seconds.

Derek's silver medal win surprised the world. At 5 feet, 3½ inches, Derek is a small man in a tall man's sport. He is known by his Nordic competitors as "The Little Man with the Big Strokes."

Derek's record-breaking performance and silver medal were a bit of a surprise to even the people who know him best, because the 5,000-meter is not his best race. Friends and family eagerly await his best event, which is the 1,500-meter race on February 19.

Derek grew up in the west side of San Bernardino with his brother and single father. He attended Roosevelt Elementary School and Eisenhower High School. He first learned to skate at the Stardust Roller Rink in Highland, where he became an avid in-line skater.

As a Mexican American youth growing up in southern California, Derek did not set foot on ice until he was 17 years of age. Derek would be 26 years old before he would switch from in-line skating to ice skating in 1996 in order to shoot for the Olympic gold.

Derek's road to the Olympics have not been easy. He and his wife Tiffany have struggled to make ends meet while raising a little girl, Mia Elizabeth, while Derek trained for the Olympics. Unlike most skaters who train full time, Derek worked part time at a Home Depot to help support his family. Derek has doggedly pursued his dream against all odds. When peo-

ple said he could not do it, he indicated he could do it, and he did do it.

We do not have too many Winter Olympians from San Bernardino. The beauty of the Olympic Games is the opportunity they allow all of us to experience the glory and triumph through our athletes. We feel a connection with them and all the individuals that participated.

The residents of San Bernardino watched their native son with pride as he broke the world record in the 5,000-meter skate to win the silver medal. As the first Mexican American to ever appear in the Winter Olympics, let alone win a medal, Derek has expanded the dreams of millions of Hispanic boys and girls throughout the United States and the world, giving them hope that you have an opportunity to compete in an area where many other individuals do not compete.

Derek Parra is an American hero. One of eight Olympians chosen by fellow teammates to carry the American flag into the opening ceremonies, Derek accepted the honor even though his first race was the next day. While most athletes spend the night before a race resting, Derek jeopardized his medal chances to carry Old Glory.

With two events left in the Games, Derek Parra has already made history and opened the world of possibility for Hispanic Americans. I will be rooting for Derek as he competes in the 1,500- and 10,000-meter races. Bring home the gold medal, Derek. San Bernardino and Rialto are behind you. We all pray for you. Our prayers are with you. We wish you the best. We know you will do the best. You have made us proud.

SUPPORTING CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, we are at an important point in our legislative calendar and at a point that will have great impact on the future of this institution, this House and this Congress. We are also at an important point in the history of our country and what direction we might take.

In the next several hours, in the next several days, we will take up the debate of the Shays-Meehan campaign finance legislation. We will have a singular opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to at last take soft money out of politics. We will have one shining moment to end transactional politics on Capitol Hill, and we will have one chance to actually make sure that working families' voices are heard in the halls outside of this Chamber instead of just the voices of special interest groups and high-powered lobbyists. And I hope that my colleagues will see that opportunity and seize it and join together and pass the Shays-Meehan legislation and bring rational, reasonable campaign finance laws into effect in this Congress.

We are also in an important point in our history in terms of what direction this country will take. And those questions will be answered by our debate around the administration's budget and around our own budgetary initiatives that will be put forward on this floor. And I just want to take a moment to just do a gut check on where we are in this country's history.

We are without question the wealthiest generation of any people that has ever walked this Earth. We have acquired in this generation, my generation, greater wealth and done it faster than any other generations on this planet. We have seen in the past 20 years the average income of the top 1 percent of earners in this country increase by a staggering \$414,000 per year. We have seen the number of millionaires in our society increase by 400 percent over the past 10 years. The rate of home ownership is through the roof, never been higher in this country.

We are faced now with several challenges, knowing that we are the wealthiest generation, knowing we have the blessings of generations that have gone before us. We have a couple of challenges, and I think the way we face these challenges is instructive as to the type of people and the type of country that we become.

We are faced with the challenge of financing the cost of this war in Afghanistan. And what is our response? If I can take the instruction from the President's State of the Union Address and the instructions of the majority party, we are saying that we do not want to pay for this war. We do not want to pay for this war. We want our tax cuts. That is what we are saying as a generation. We want our tax cuts. Even though we are the wealthiest generations of Americans, do not phase out our tax cuts. Do not delay them. Give us our tax cuts. And instead, we are saying let us build a deficit, and let us just hand the bill, hand the debt owed for this war to our children and to their children.

And that, Mr. Speaker, I see as just disingenuous and to a certain degree cowardly. We have a responsibility to the next generations. We have a responsibility, especially given the blessings that we have in this country, to face up to our responsibility and to pay for the cost of the prosecution of this war. It is a just war, and I stand with the President in the prosecution of this war, but we must face up to our responsibilities.

I also say the way we are facing our responsibilities to pay for Social Security, to provide a secure and decent requirement and health care for America's greatest generations, and instead, what we hear on the floor in our debate is that we should somehow privatize Social Security, we should somehow suggest curtailing benefits to those who are our most vulnerable and most in need. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we have missed, if that is the direction we have taken, we have missed our mission. We have missed our opportunity